

Food Crisis Grips Whole of India

Wholesale state trading is a wholesale hoax to befool the people

The country is passing through a serious food crisis. In West Bengal with effect from May 21 last the quota of rice in areas under statutory rationing has been reduced by 100 grammes. In so far as the areas under modified rationing are concerned, the less said the better. For, there is practically no supply of either rice or wheat to the people in the areas under modified rationing. In Bihar, the same is the position. The state, it seems, has to depend not on rice or wheat for the sustenance of its people but on the tall promises of the Ministers. Food articles are completely off from the market. Of course, those who have enough money can have them from the blackmarketeers at prices beyond the reach of common men.

Uttar Pradesh is in acute shortage of wheat, particularly in major urban centres, like Kanpur, Allahabad, Benaras, Gorakhpur and Gaziabad. In Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh there have been food riots. In Kerala the rationing system has almost broken down. Rajasthan, Orissa and some other states are faced with a acute food problem. Excepting perhaps Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Haryana, the rest of India is passing through an unprecedented food crisis. And that too after so much fanfare about the 'success' of the green revolution.

It is true that compared to the actual requirements of food grains for the total population, the production of food grains in our country is not adequate. According to official figures, the production of food grains declined to 104.6 million tonnes in 1971-72 as compared to 107.8 million tonnes in 1970-71. In 1971-72 the per capita availability of cereals was 381.2 grammes and pulses 47.0 grammes making a total of 428.2 grammes per day. No one can be sure about the correctness of these official figures. Because, there is no scientific method and machinery for correct compilation of these figures and more often than not the figures for production of food articles as given by the

Agriculture Department vary greatly from those supplied by the Food Department. Be that as it may, if these figures are any indication, there is no denying that production of food articles is inadequate compared to our requirement.

In such a situation, the only way to ensure equitable distribution of the food articles produced in the country is to introduce all-out state-trading in food articles. The SUCI, unlike other left and democratic parties, has been demanding all-out state-trading in food articles for a long time. Time and again it has pointed out that no piecemeal measure can even ease to some extent the chronic food problem in our country, let alone solving it. When the Centre decided to take over the wholesale trade in wheat, the SUCI unambiguously stated that the proposed measure was bound to fail and hoarding would continue, inasmuch as the wholesalers would successfully instigate the big agriculturists not to sell their produce to the Government and pass themselves on as retailers. This apprehension of ours has been proved cent per cent correct. Even a monopoly Press like the Statesman has been forced to admit that the big agriculturists are not selling their produce to the

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Call of Bihar State Committee of the SUCI

Observe Bihar Bandh on June 7 and Join Massive protest Demonstration

Patna, 27th May—The meeting of the Bihar State Committee of the SUCI, held at Patna from 19th May to 22nd May, reviewed the existing abnormal situation in the state, caused by steep rise in prices, non-availability of food and other essential commodities, extreme scarcity of drinking water both in rural and urban areas, power crisis, chaos in food market caused by the government take-over of wholesale trade only of wheat, without touching the retail trade, bunglings in the matter of levy collection, mounting unemployment, burden of ever increasing taxes, above all, brutal police oppression on the democratic rights of the people by the ruling Congress Government.

The meeting also reviewed the situation caused by the repressive measures adopted by the Congress Government of Bihar, headed by Kedar Pande, the beating and firing by the Police on the workers and peasants at Karguli, Ranchi, Kumardubi, Chouri (Bhojpur), Govindpur (Dhanbad) and the killing of Sri Suraj Narayan Singh, a veteran freedom fighter and the Socialist Party leader by the Police and came to the conclusion that the ruling Congress Governments both at the Centre and in the State, despite tall talks of 'socialism' and 'garibi hatao' have intensified the problems of the common people and brought the country on the brink of complete economic collapse, because of the avowed capitalist path followed by the ruling Congress Government.

Under the present situation, the Bihar State Committee of the SUCI feels

that the people can protect their interests and resist the attacks only by launching massive mass movements against the anti-people and fascistic policies of the ruling Congress Government.

So, to register a strong protest against these anti-people and fascistic measures of the Congress Government, the Bihar State SUC has given a call to all sections of the people to observe 'Bihar Bandh' on 7th June next. The essential services are, however, excluded from the purview of this Bandh. All opposition parties including other left parties have also given a call to this 'Bandh' on 7th June next.

The Bihar State Committee of the SUCI has also decided to stage a massive protest demonstration on 18th June next at the State Capital at Patna when the State Assembly will open for the monsoon session.

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The Bogey of So-Called "Totalitarian Measures" is Aimed at Shelving the Responsibility of Feeding the People

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Government and passing their stocks to the wholesalers, now posing as retailers at prices higher than the price fixed by the Government. The result is that there is no chance of the Government reaching its target of wheat procurement.

When it is admitted on all hands that the big agriculturists are withholding their stocks from sale to the Government, the only reasonable course is to impose compulsory levy of foodgrains on the big agriculturists, in case the government is serious to procure necessary quantity of food grains and reach the procurement target of wheat. But it will be too much to expect this reasonable measure from the ruling Congress party and its Government, representing the Indian bourgeoisie, including the rural bourgeoisie. So Mr. A.P. Shinde, Union Minister of State for Agriculture, in conveying the Government decision, said in a recent meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party that "the Government was not opposed to the principle of compulsory levy but it could not be done under the present situation." The Food Minister of West Bengal also echoed the same voice. To him, compulsory levy of foodgrains on the big agriculturists is a "totalitarian measure not in conformity with the Congress policy". To impose compulsory levy of foodgrains on the big agriculturists, in order to feed the hungry people, is an undemocratic totalitarian method whereas not to impose the compulsory levy on the big agriculturists, allow them to hoard foodgrains, compel the people to starve and cause premature death to hundreds and thousands of the people is a democratic measure in conformity with the Congress policy according to

the Congress Ministers. Is it not a glaring testimony to the pro-jotedar anti-people character of the ruling Congress?

It is not for nothing that the Congress Governments are unwilling to impose compulsory levy of foodgrains on the big agriculturists even now when the country is passing through an almost near-famine condition. The Food Minister of Bihar has openly charged some Congress legislators of the state with hoarding food grains. In Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh it is reported in the Press that the Congress leaders, including some Cabinet Ministers, are hoarding their foodgrains. The Chief Minister of Maharashtra and another colleague of his have been reported in the Press to have hoarded 1000 and 4000 bags respectively of foodgrains. If the Congress Chief Ministers, other Ministers and leaders indulge in hoarding of foodgrains, it is no wonder that Food Ministers of the Congress Governments would be opposed to compulsory levy of foodgrains on the big agriculturists.

The food problem is associated with three issues. First there is the issue of production. Unless there is sufficient production there is bound to be shortage. Really speaking, if we want to increase our food production sufficiently and continuously to ensure supply of adequate quantity of food to our people our agriculture must be mechanised and modernised. But in the existing capitalist system in our country, particularly in the third phase of the period of general crisis of world capitalist economy marked by complete loss of the relative stability of the market which the world capitalist economy enjoyed till the second world war, our agriculture can not be modernised on the basis of

big mechanised land farming. Even then if land reform measures are effectively carried out, the poor and the middle peasants are supplied with cheap liberal credit, moratorium on their old debts is declared, adequate quantity of fertiliser is supplied to them at cheap prices and facility for perennial irrigation is guaranteed then the production can be significantly increased. But even after 25 years of independence all these are a far cry. Second, the issue of distribution. It should be realised that adequate production alone is no guarantee against acute food problem and famine. Unless there is an effective machinery for equitable distribution of the food articles produced in the country, our people will not get food even if there is sufficient production. Because, the distribution system having been left entirely to the hoarders, speculators and monopolists, they would corner the food articles produced, create artificial scarcity of them in the market, manipulate their prices and fleece the people to reap maximum profit possible in the circumstances. This is actually what is happening in our country now. And it is connected with the third issue, viz., the issue of price of food articles. If there is enough production and good distribution system but, in spite of them, the prices of food articles remain beyond the reach of the commonmen then it is no satisfaction to the people that there has been enough production and there is a good distribution system. Our people are more concerned with getting adequate quantity of food articles at reasonable prices. So price is a great concern to the people.

But, again thanks to the Congress Government and its policies, prices of daily necessities of life are going

up by leaps and bounds almost daily. This rise in prices is due not so much to fall in production as to hoarding and price-manipulation by the hoarders, speculators and the monopolists coupled with the Congress Government's policy of unbridled deficit financing, imposing heavy burden of indirect taxation on essential commodities, pro-monopoly credit policy and refusal to confiscate crores and crores of rupees of black money in the hands of the monopolists. That the price rise is not due to fall in production will be evident from facts. The production of sugar was 31.12 lakh tonnes in 1971-72. In 1972-73 the production is 36.00 lakh tonnes. Despite greater production during 1972-73 the price of sugar is continuously rising. Or, take the case of price of cotton textiles. In 1971 the production of cotton textile was 7356 million meters. In 1972, the production exceeded by about 1500 million meters compared to the previous year. During this time cotton prices have remained steady or have declined. Nevertheless the prices of cotton textiles have gone up appreciably. It is not necessary to give more examples to drive home the point that the Government's action in holding the price line is disgraceful. The Government has sacrificed the interests of the people at the altar of the interest of the monopolists.

The anti-people policy of the Government will be further evident from increasing deficit financing resorted to by the Government in the first few weeks in the current financial year and thereafter. In the week ended May 4 last, money supply had gone up by as much as Rs. 105 crores. Nearly the entire rise in money supply is accounted

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Congress Anti-Socials Creating Serious Law and Order Situation in West Bengal

"Many of the political murders which are taking place in West Bengal since the last general elections are the result of these blood-feuds (within the Congress). It is no good trying to assess West Bengal's present law and order situation without putting one's finger on this sordid state of affairs within the ruling party itself." This is no comment from any political opponent of the ruling Congress in the State of West Bengal. New Age, English organ of the CPI, a constituent of the Progressive Democratic Alliance that now backs the ruling Congress Government in the State, in its issue dated May 13 last had made this observation. In fact, dog-fights within the ruling Congress party in West Bengal have come out nakedly with all their ugliness.

After the capture of the Governmental power by totally and completely rigging the general elections to the West Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1972, the leaders of the ruling Congress party and the Ministers assured the people that they would restore law and order, re-establish the rule of law and transform West Bengal into Sonar Bangla. This assurance subsequently proved to be a cover of nefarious activities of the Congressmen in the State to wipe out political opponents of the ruling party. Terror, threat and intimidation by the workers and supporters of the ruling party, particularly its student and youth wings, against the workers and supporters of the left and democratic parties and the mass organisations led by them became very common. Forcible occupation of party and union offices of the left and the democratic parties, looting of furniture inside such offices and even setting fire to them were resorted to by the Congressmen. Thousands of workers and supporters of the left and democratic parties were forced to leave their hearth and home. Tens of thousands of false cases were instituted against the workers and supporters of the left and democratic parties and the common men who dared to protest against Congress vandalism. Brutal murders of the workers and supporterers of the left and

democratic parties were committed by these new *maharajas*, the ruling Congressmen. All these illegal criminal acts were committed with the help of known anti-social elements recruited by the Congress into its ranks in broad day light under the very nose of the so-called custodians of the law and order of the State. Nay, they were committed in connivance with and with the backing of the administration and the police by the ruling Congress party men and the anti-social elements. The big news papers in our country, having sold their conscience to the ruling Congress and its Government in the State, did not publish these incidents of criminal activities by the Congressmen. On the contrary, they went whole hog in praising the ruling party, its Government and Ministers for their 'wonderful' achievements.

Our party along with all other left and democratic parties in West Bengal is trying to unitedly resist these mounting attacks on the democratic rights of the people by the ruling Congress and its Government. We have not stopped there. We have drawn the pointed attention of the people to the fact that such undemocratic and criminal activities would only hasten the rise of dark forces of fascism inside the country and threaten the very security and life of our

people. That note of caution has come to be true. Even the ally of the Congress, viz., the CPI, and the bourgeois Press are openly saying that the law and order situation in West Bengal is in shambles; there is no security of life of ordinary citizens now; anti-social elements are ruling different areas. They are moving with revolvers, pistols and guns in broad day light, forcibly extorting money from common men and murdering people when they refuse to pay money to these anti-social elements. The police does not take any action against these miscreants, as they move with Congress flags, enjoying protection and patronage from the high-ups in the hierarchy in the ruling Congress, including the Ministers.

But when unscrupulous persons with no principle lead a party for power and pelf and for that purpose do not hesitate to use the anti-social elements against their political opponents such a situation as now prevails in West Bengal is created. Dog-fights in their most naked and ugly forms among the different groups of the Congressmen have started in West Bengal. They are not now confined within the limit of ordinary squabbles. They have assumed the character of armed clashes between different groups, forcible occupation of areas under the control of one group by another group through armed clashes and even murder of one group by another group of Congressmen. The recent incidents at Dum Dum, Manicktola, Barrackpore industrial belt, West Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Gaighata (in the last case the Congress MLA Sri Chandipada Mitra had been brutally attacked by his rival faction), to mention only a few, bear testimony to these armed clashes between the Congressmen.

This is the picture of solidarity of the ruling Congress! But the people of

West Bengal are not so much interested in the solidarity of the ruling Congress as they are in the maintenance of a democratic atmosphere where every political party and individual can freely move and act democratically according to respective ideologies and politics and the people can follow their normal avocation of life peacefully. But thanks to the ruling Congress party and its Government, the hoodlums, flying the tricolour Congress flag, are holding the people to ransom and actually have established a Goonda Raj in West Bengal. We appeal to the people of the state to realise the gravity of the situation, shake off their illusion about the ruling Congress and its Government, if they have any even now, organise themselves solidly, oppose the Congress-backed Goonda Raj and restore normal democratic atmosphere. The SUC, along with other left and democratic parties in the State, is trying to organise the people in that direction. It is the sacred duty of the people to help the SUCI by all means in that work.

Demonstration before Sukinda BDO Office for Food and Work

Sukinda (Cuttack), 25th May—On behalf of the SUCI and KKMS, a demonstration was staged before the BDO office, Sukinda, on 17th May, last demanding food and work and also against price rise of essential commodities. A deputation led by the SUC leader Com. Mayadhar Nayak submitted a memorandum to the BDO demanding immediate relief to the people. The BDO assured the deputationists that he would look into the matter.

Later a meeting was held in the BDO office compound. Com. Mayadhar Nayak, Com. Baishnab Charan Behera, Com. Haladhar Dhir, Com. Manik Mandal spoke in the meeting.

The Orissa Krushak O Khet Majuria Sangha Demands Urgent Relief Measures

Cuttack, May 18—On behalf of the Orissa Krushak O Khet Majuria Sangha the following statement has been released to the Press :

"Orissa is in the grip of serious food crisis. According to reliable non-official sources, roughly 50 lakhs people of 1033 out of a total of 3824 gram panchayats in 12 of the 13 districts (except Sambalpur) in the state have been affected by large-scale failure of crops, resulting in acute food shortage. In these panchayati areas the extent of damage is estimated to be about 50 per cent and in several other areas crops have failed by at least 25 per cent. Even Government sources admit that 702 gram panchayats in 144 blocks in different parts of the state have been affected in varying degrees, which is an understatement.

"As a result of this large-scale crop failure and consequent near-famine condition in the affected areas, the people have started leaving their villages for towns in search of food and employment. A large number of people have even left Orissa and moved into neighbouring states like West Bengal. Reports of hundreds of starvation-death are pouring in. But the Government in its characteristic manner has

attributed these deaths to malnutrition and not to starvation, which also is untrue.

"The relief work so far undertaken by the Government is too inadequate to touch even the fringe of the problem. Even then whatever relief measures have been introduced are vitiated by corruption, petty party politics of the ruling Congress and other reactionary parties, red-tapism and bureaucratic handling.

"We strongly feel that popular committees with equal representatives from different political parties and Krushak and Khet Majuria organisations should be formed and these committees must be vested with the power to inspect relief work by the Government. We demand the opening of sufficient number of gruel kitchens, starting of crash programmes for giving work to the people, remission of land revenue and of payment of loans, remission of tuition fee and other fees payable by the students, free distribution of seeds and manures to the peasants in the affected areas, etc.

"We call upon the people of the state to organise themselves and compel the Government by creating mass pressure to accept these demands."

FOOD CRISIS

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nor by an increase in the Reserve Bank's credit to the Government. Bank credit to the Government had been rising by an unusual inflationary rate of 16% in the past years.

In the background of all these facts it is clear that under the slogan of 'garibi hatao' (eradication of poverty) and democratic socialism the ruling Congress

and its Governments are on the one hand, pushing the people of our country further into the abysmal depth of poverty, hunger and sub-human condition of life while, on the other hand, helping the tycoons to amass fabulous profits, part of which goes to the Congress fund. This is Indira Gandhi's socialism ! Our people must throw the Congress out from the present position and power.

Observe Bihar Bandh on 7th. June

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The SUC, in its appeal, has demanded :—

1. Stop price rise and fix the prices of all articles of daily necessity.

2. Complete take-over of all food grain trades, both wholesale and retail and take the responsibility of distribution of food articles to the people at fair price.

3. Complete rationing in all towns and industrial centres and the food articles, Kerosene oil etc. must be made available to the rural people at fair price on cards.

4. The rate of minimum wages must be revised in conformity with the rise in price index.

5. Frequent failure in power supply must be stopped and arrangement for adequate supply of drinking water must be immediately made.

6. Coal must be made available every where at the pre-nationalisation level of price.

7. Levy wheat must be procured from the rich peasants and jotedars on the basis of actual surplus only

and the poor and middle peasants must be exempted from levy.

8. Non-interference of police in legitimate democratic mass struggles must be ensured, all political prisoners must be released and all false cases instituted against political workers in connection with mass struggles must be dropped.

9. Judicial enquiry into police firing in Kumardhubi, Gobindapur, Kargali, Tantisilwai and Chouri must be made. All Party Enquiry Committee to enquire into the murder of Suraj Babu must be constituted, all persons and officers responsible for his murder must be arrested and the high officials connected with the ghastly incident must be suspended.

The Bihar State Committee of the SUCI has also urged upon all left and democratic parties of the state, including SP, SSP, CPI, CPI(M) to come forward to forge United Front of the left and democratic parties and forces to successfully conduct the struggles on these issues.

Com. Pritish Chanda Condemns Ban on Strikes in Railways

Com. Pritish Chanda, Secretary of the UTUC (Lenin Sarani) and Convener UTUC, Railway Front, in a statement has strongly protested against the measure of the Central Congress Government to ban strikes in Railways under the DIR for six months. The UTUC (Lenin Sarani) cautioned the Railwaymen and the working class of the country before about the possibility of adoption of such a fascistic measure by the Central Congress Government and now this measure of blanket ban on strike has come as a naked reality.

The Government, instead of resolving the acute problems of life, has intensified them many times and now it seeks to take away

the fundamental right of the Railwaymen to strike. This betrays Indira Government's fascist character.

Com Chanda urged the Railwaymen not to bow down before the fascist attack, but to rise up and fight unitedly in defence of their fundamental rights. This ban has been imposed to frustrate the decision of the Railwaymen to go on strike from 27th August next on the demand of bonus, need-based wage, etc.

Com Pritish Chanda has also urged upon the leaders of the AIRF and other associations of the Railwaymen to immediately unite and fight back unitedly the undemocratic attack of the Government.